

International Rock Gardener

ISSN 2053-7557



Number 53 The Scottish Rock Garden Club - May 2014

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May 2014



The month of May in Aberdeen proved as inconstant as any lover – it could not decide whether to frolic happily in the sun or create drama out of nothing with minor storms whipping up from the most innocent looking clouds. While this is all part of our seasonal changes, repeated around the world, it is little wonder that gardeners tend to fixate on the weather forecast and fret more than might reasonably be expected from those supposedly “enjoying” a passion. Thank goodness we can usually find something to give us joy in our gardens, whatever the weather throws at us!

---World of Bulbs---

Spring in an Aberdeen Garden text and photos J. Ian Young



Painting with flowers

At this time of year many gardens around us have little or no colour while our kind of garden, full of wild plants from around the world, is bursting with spring colour. Gardening to me is just another art medium where I use plants rather than paints or inks. I paint with flowers and foliage arranging the plants to form an endless composition of changing colours, shapes and textures. The overall scale of the work depends on your garden boundaries but within those parameters you can create many vignettes that work both as a small unit as well as forming a harmonious whole.

Each bed is made to work hard and has a number of phases of flowering throughout the year: phase one is revealed as we emerge from winter when *Galanthus*, *Leucojum*, *Eranthis* and *Crocus* dominate.

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Galanthus and *Iris* 'Katharine Hodgkin'



Cyclamen coum, *Galanthus* 'Elizabeth Harrison', *Crocus*, *Iris*, with a new *Saxifraga* trough behind.

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Eranthis hyemalis centrepiece with the first *Corydalis malkensis*.



Galanthus with old *Crocus vernus* hybrids - spot the other 'small whites', top right.

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Corydalis malkensis and *C. solida* coming into their own.



Something of a "purple patch" – *Primula cachemiriana* and *Corydalis solid* seedlings.

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Rhododendron pachysanthum is an old favourite, flowering just as the *Erythronium* season begins.

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Anemone ranunculoides in the foreground.



Corydalis solida with *Narcissus bulbocodium*.

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Next we enjoy what I think of as the 'spring flush' where bright colours, mostly provided by *Corydalis* *solida*, carpet most of our garden beds. Choosing plants that will at least tolerate your local climate and ground conditions is the secret behind being considered a good grower – we have done just that.



The majority of the plants we grow like the cool moist humus rich soil and are often referred to as shade plants however they need no shade growing here – for this purpose 'Scotland is in shade' – we simply do not get the high temperatures from even full sunshine that other areas experience.

Happily most of these plants not only tolerate growing close together but they actually grow better this way – forming supportive plant communities. Shading the ground with plants and foliage is the best way to retain moisture in the ground also it helps prevent weeds from germinating.

Corydalis solida is among our favourite plants with its gentle foliage topped by clusters of bright coloured flowers appearing in late March, flowers peaking in April and by mid-May they have gone back underground leaving space for another plant to have its season.

Corydalis solida and *C. malkensis* combine well with many the moisture loving *Narcissus* such as *Narcissus cyclamineus*, its hybrids and *Narcissus bulbocodium* which also self-seeds around especially in gravelled areas.



Narcissus cyclamineus, *Muscari*, *Scilla*, *Hepatica*, *Cyclamen hederifolium* foliage (which has spent the winter being chewed full of holes) and some *Cotoneaster* berries, which are ever-present in our garden.

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Colchicum agrippinum foliage, *Scilla*, *Narcissus* 'Snipe' and *Primula marginata* forms.



A white form of *Corydalis solidiflora* grows in a community with *Trillium rivale*, *Erythronium revolutum*, *E. japonicum*, *Dicentra cucullaria* and a stray culinary herb *Petroselinum crispum* forming a beautiful tapestry of foliage with colour highlights provided from the flowers.

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Below is the same grouping from a wider perspective, showing that *Corydalis flexuosa* is already coming into flower and the fresh green foliage of *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue' is expanding well.



Hellebores not only add to the patchwork of colour and texture but also bring form as they add height.

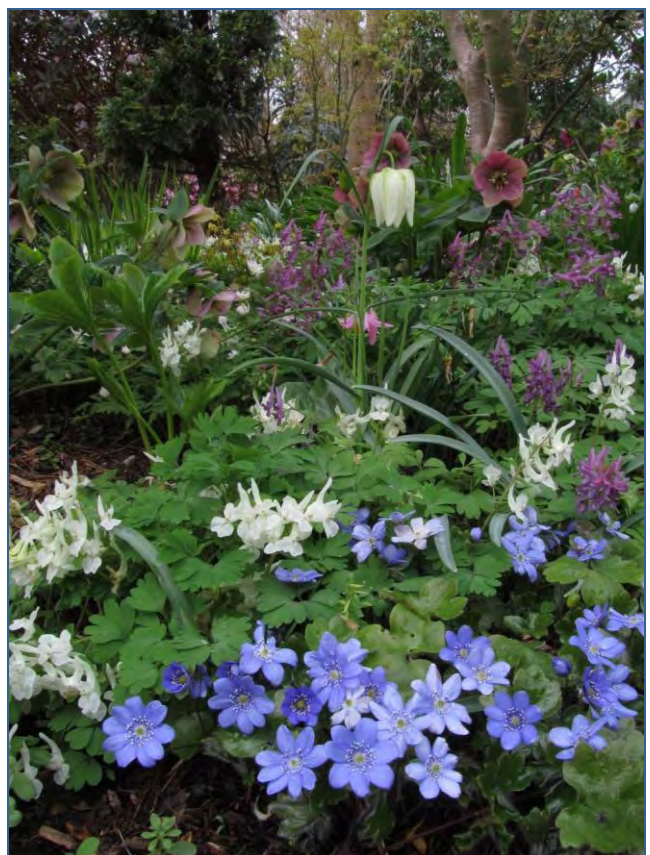
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We favour a lush planting with as much ground covered as possible.



View across a *Rhododendron ciliatum*.

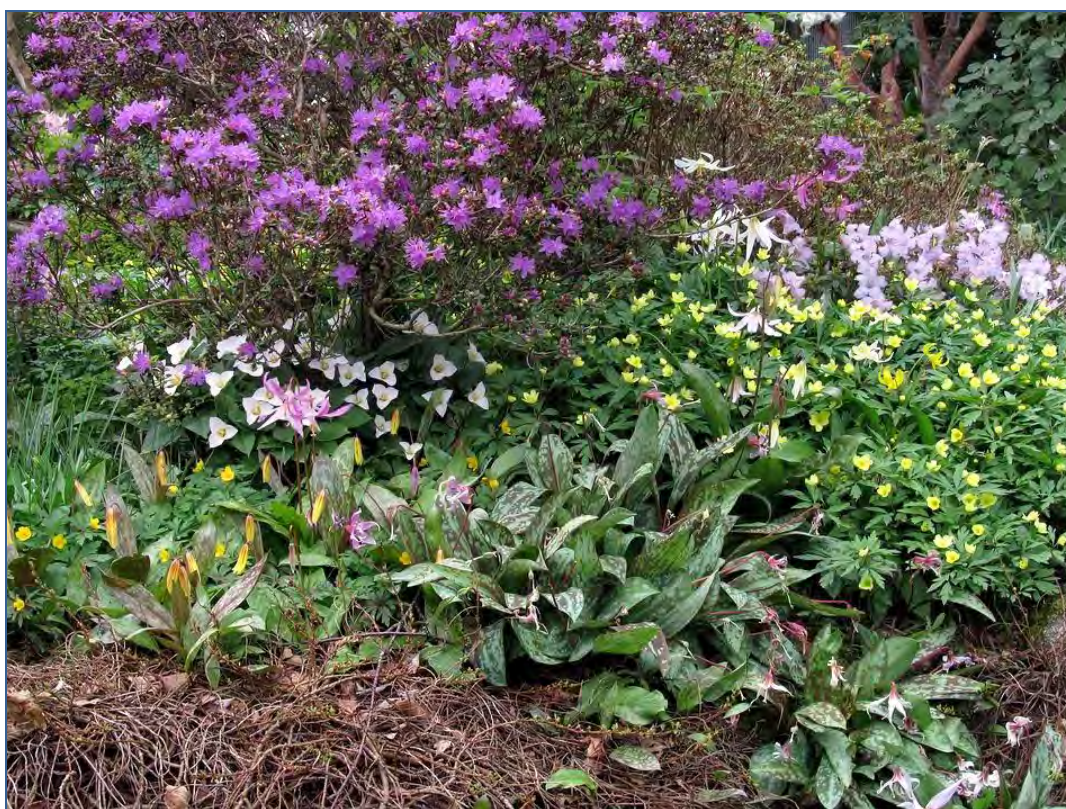


Mixture with *Hepaticas* and *Helleborus*.

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Variations of form whether in shape, colour, size or foliage all add to the interest of a flower bed.



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The genus *Dicentra* also provides excellent ground cover that works well with taller bulbs such as *Fritillaria*, *Erythronium* and *Trillium* growing up through it.



Fritillaria pallidiflora coming through *Dicentra* with *Rhododendron* 'Dora Amateis' one of the most reliable hybrids, in the background.

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We don't recognise the possibility of overcrowding – especially at *Erythronium* time.



A view across a raised bed with *Primula marginata* to the *Erythroniums* beyond.

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So we move on through our spring flowers to the next stage of the year – with a happy heart and our fingers crossed that we avoid late frosts in June. You can follow the garden in [the Bulb Log](#). J.I.Y.

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---Plant Identification---

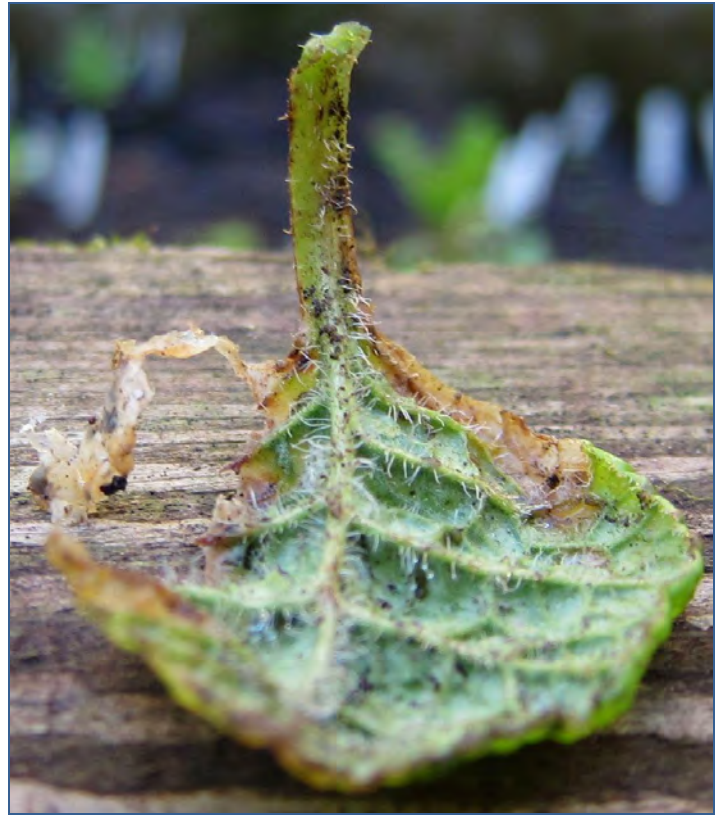
A Primula Puzzle, or - can I have some help? John Mattingley, text and photos.



The plant above was photographed on the 7th May 2013: but what is it?



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I can tell you that it was collected by Martyn Rix who is a well-known plant collector and author. The plant was probably collected around about eight years ago and it has stubbornly refused to flower with me until last year: for this reason I was loathe to dig it up and photograph its roots. By studying each picture you should be able to get the vital clues and, if the plant is known, a name for it.



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Now for some more photos, which I hope show all details.



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I would of course love to know your conclusions. It may be that this plant is commonly available by now and it is my ignorance that is being manifested. Please send your suggestions to John Mattingley at Cluny House Gardens (john@bonzadb.com)

J. M.

About the Scottish Rock Garden Club:

To join the SRGC or donate to support the work of this international club of plant lovers see the website at www.srgc.net - membership options begin at £10 per annum for an electronic subscription.

The Bulb Log has been published every week since 2003 – see years 2003 to 2008 [here](#) and more recent years [here](#).

The SRGC disburses student and exploration grants and offers junior membership, for those under 18 years, from only £3 per annum.

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---Plant Portrait---

New Cyclamen at the Beauty Slope by Zdeněk Zvolánek

I am not sure if I deserve the label of a Cyclamen fanatic, because I grow only the species which are hardy outdoors. It is admirable how they march bravely on to the continental frosty winter. I would prefer to have more of them even though my slope is too sunny with only miniature spots of shade but this is a matter of some donations and a good lump of blooming luck. I am not absolutely a mean man, I bought and obtained some lovely forms and species in England, but they were shy and weak and died the first season before they established in my cruel culture in the garden with no protection. So, I have lost *Cyclamen libanoticum*, *C. intaminatum*, *C. alpinum*, *C. cilicium* and *C. colchicum*, just to mention a few. Also, I have no fence so there was a possibility of stealing some attractive species by an experienced and clever Czech rock gardener, the collector!

My *Cyclamen purpurascens* (*C. europeum*) is from Slovenia, Slovakia (plain leaf *C. p.* forma *fatrense*) and Moravia. They do not provide self sown seedlings in my dry spring steppe conditions. I tried the white *Cyclamen hederifolium* from Stara Planina Mts. of Bulgaria and it died, so I keep this species from the late Joyce Carruthers' garden in Victoria, BC, Canada; this species is also reluctant to make seedlings here. *Cyclamen mirabile* is established in a flat area shaded under a larger shrub of *Daphne transcaucasica*. My *Cyclamen colchicum* from Kirsten Andersen was somehow lost too. Of course the best rock garden show is orchestrated by *Cyclamen coum* var. *coum* and partly by *C. coum* var. *caucasicum*. Hundreds of baby grassy seedlings appeared after every wet autumn and milder winter. Thanks to Joyce I have a broad flexible variation in colours of flowers and leaves. I never water them and they are able to cope with quite lot of the hot Bohemian sunshine and dry winds.



Cyclamen pseudibericum var. *pseudibericum* from Turkey

A long time ago we visited a tiny garden near Munich in Bavaria and the owner – bird photographer Peter Zeiting – offered me his seedlings of *Cyclamen pseudibericum* var. *pseudibericum*. He collected

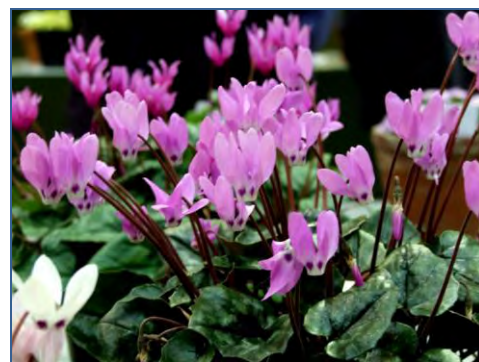
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the stock in a pass at an elevation of 1400m in Anatolia, somewhere north of Kahraman-Maras. The flowers are magenta red and this species flowers later than *C. coum* and for longer time. The leaves are thicker in substance, heart shaped and pleasantly glossy. All my friends were excited by its large flowers and I distributed a few plants to the best growers. I will pronounce this species hardy, because of a few very tough winters when they survived.



Cyclamen x schwarzii in the Beauty Slope

The new Cyclamen for a father's kissings come to me by a divine accident. After a show at the RHS Wisley Garden I offered to transport back to car the pots of the English plantswoman, Joy Bishop. As I did this I was surprised by an unknown clone of her *Cyclamen pseudibericum* with larger flowers and distinct pale pink colours.



C. pseudibericum; *C. x schwarzii* (photos Oron Peri) *C. x schwarzii* (photos Roma Fiddes and Diane Clement)

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Joy has known me since 1981 (when I visited her garden in Surrey) and when I asked her about this special clone, she generously gave me the whole plant in its pot. At home, when I started to plant the newcomer, I discovered that it contained twins (two corms). One plant was, for security purposes, planted in a spot with weak shade and one is nearly in full sun. This year in early March the plant from the sunny place surprised me with extra large flowers (30 x 35mm), with broader overlapping petals, borne with the mature leaves (approximately 50 x 53mm).



Of course, I immediately opened my Cyclamen book and discovered that Joy Bishop's gift is actually a hybrid between *Cyclamen libanoticum* and *C. pseudibericum* described as *Cyclamen x schwarzii* Grey-Wilson. When I looked at the picture of the pot from Joy Bishop you can see that the flowers on the left side of the pot have a less defined, paler W-shaped blotch at the bottom of petals: the right part of flowers has a nicely contrasted saturated deep purple blotch, so we can see there are two specimens together.

Above: *C. libanoticum* in the Australian garden of Otto Fauser (photo by Fermiano de Sousa).

Below: The pot of hybrid cyclamen given by Joy Bishop to Z.Z.



The different colour in my rock garden and in the pot is probably the result of different pH in the substrate of the English pot and my calcareous soil with the better ultraviolet rays of the Czech Karst. Each of the tubby flowers offered during 14 days of bloom were knocked on their nose with my forefinger to make the proper love (pollination) and now the short flower stems (pedicels) are happily coiled. From the literature we learn this hybrid is fertile so therefore I can dream about seedlings with white flowers one day - if my luck holds.

Z.Z.